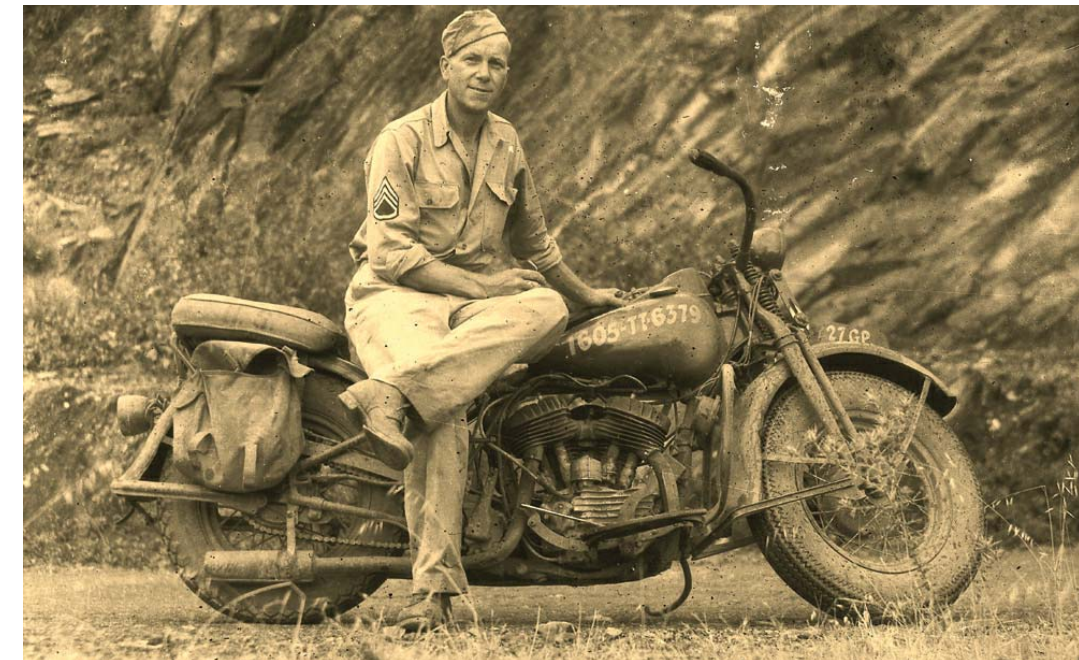




Men and women of the 27th Fighter Wing form a 27 in front of F-111 jets on the flightline of Cannon Air Force Base. F111's were at Cannon from 1960 until 1999.



A maintainer removes a P-40 Warhawk engine during the 1940s.



During WWII, the U.S. Army asked Harley-Davidson to produce a motorcycle as good as BMW's side-valve R71. Harley copied the BMW, which they marketed as the "Hummer" from 1948-1966. This Harley Springer was a part of the 27th Fighter Group as evidenced by the 27th Group nomenclature on the side of the motorcycle.

27th Fighter Wing history spans four decades of service

Photos and story courtesy 27th Fighter Wing Historical Office

(Editor's note: This is part one of a two part-series)

The history of the 27th Fighter Wing spans four wars and more than 50 years of almost continuous service.

On Feb. 1, 1940, the US Army activated the 27th Bombardment Group (Light) at Barksdale Field, La., and equipped it with B-18 Bolo aircraft.

In October of that year the wing moved to Hunter Field, Ga., and by November 1941, they were prepared for the war that seemed inevitable.

Arriving at Fort McKinley in the Philippines on Nov. 20, the 27th BG (L) readied itself for delivery of its A-24 Dauntless aircraft. Concern grew as days turned into weeks and still the planes had not arrived. When the Japanese attacked the Philippines on Dec. 9, 1941, the situation had not changed.

Unknown to the 27th BG (L) Airmen, to avoid capture or destruction, the ship carrying the planes diverted to Aus-

tralia when the war escalated. On Dec. 18, Maj. John H. Davies, 27th BG(L) commander, and 20 aircrew flew to Australia to retrieve their planes. However, a swift Japanese advance prevented his group from returning to the Philippines.

The remainder of the wing evacuated to the Bataan Peninsula, arriving there on Thanksgiving Day to form the 2nd Battalion (27th Bombardment Group) Provisional Infantry Regiment (Air Corp). For the 99 days following the attack on Pearl Harbor until their surrender to the Japanese, they became the only Air Force unit in history to fight as an infantry regiment, and were the only unit to be taken captive in whole.

After surrendering, they were forced to endure the infamous Bataan Death March. Of the 880 or so Airmen who were taken, less than half survived captivity. Maj. Davies, his small group and the few remaining wing personnel who evacuated Bataan before its fall were assigned to the 3rd Bombardment Group.

The 27th BG(L) wasn't

going away though. On May 4, 1942, the 27th BG(L) transferred back to Hunter Field without men or equipment. Six months later the wing was once again ready for combat. Maintenance and support personnel went by sea to North Africa while aircrews and A-20 Havoc aircraft flew to South America then across to Africa. These aircraft and aircrew were transferred to the 47th Bombardment Group.

The 27th BG(L) began to rebuild for the third time with A-36 Apache dive-bombers. The re-formed 27th BG flew its first combat missions of the war on June 6, 1943.

Flying the A-36 Apache, P-40 Warhawk, and finally P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft, the 27th Fighter-Bomber Group, fought the rest of the war in Europe.

With five Distinguished Unit Citations and a Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, the Airmen of the 27th FBG were among the most decorated air units in Europe.

Inactivated on Nov. 7, 1945, the 27th FBG unit was back and flying P-47 Thunderbolts out of Fritzler Air Base, Germany by August 1946. It stayed

in Germany until transferred, without men or equipment, to Andrews Field, Md., in June 1947 and assigned to Strategic Air Command and moved to Kearney Airfield, Neb. in July.

The 27th Fighter-Escort Wing was organized on Aug. 15, 1947. In November 1947, they began flying the F-82 Twin Mustang for long range bomber escort missions. It's mission remained the same, but a move to Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas in March 1949 brought a new name and plane. The newly renamed 27th Fighter-Escort Wing (FEW) received its first jet, the F-84 Thunderjet.

In September and October 1950, the 27th Fighter-Escort Wing ferried 180 aircraft to Germany in two flights, earning the MacKay Trophy for this unprecedented feat.

The Korean War began in June 1950 and by November the wing was transferred with the advance echelon landing at Taegu AB, Korea, and the rear echelon at Itazuki AB, Japan, on Dec. 1. Combat operations in support of the United Nations began immediately and continued after the

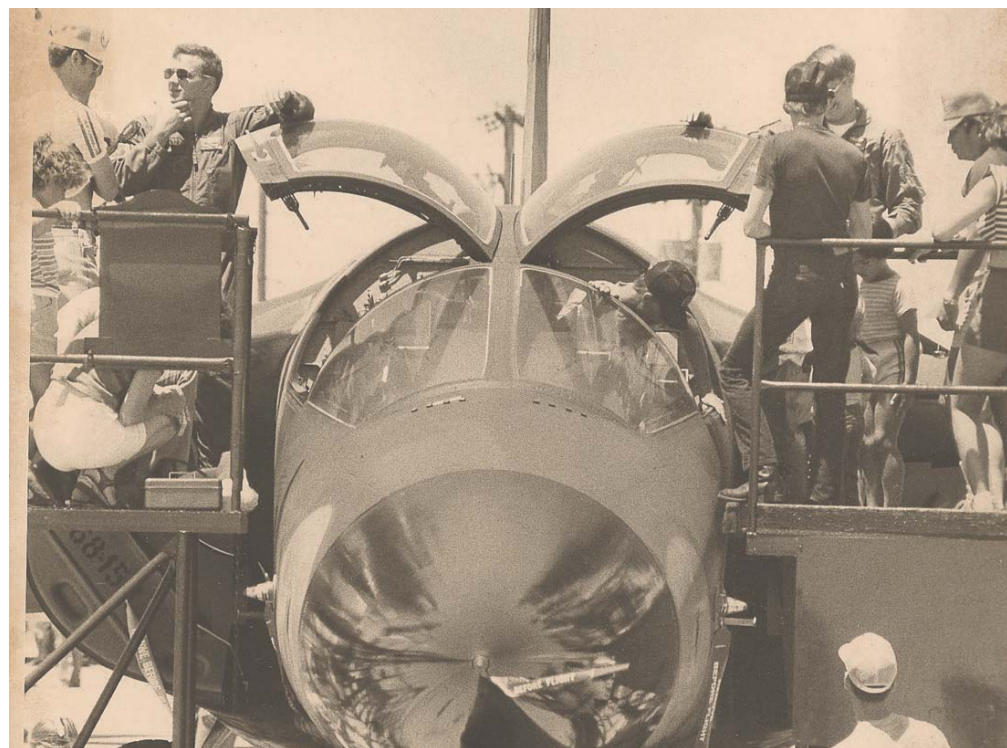
advance echelon was transferred to Itazuki in January.

The 27th FEW was the first F-84 unit to see combat action in Korea, supporting U.N. forces until July 31, 1951, when it was relieved of its duties and returned to Bergstrom. The 27th FEW earned numerous honors and awards for their combat record during the Korean War.

On Jan. 21, 1951, Lt. Col. William Bertram, commander of the 523rd Fighter-Escort Squadron, shot down the first MiG-15 for the wing and became the first F-84 pilot with a confirmed MiG kill. Two days later, on Jan. 23, the 27th FEW participated in the raid on Sinaju Air Field in North Korea and shot down four more MiG-15s. By the time the group rotated back to the United States, they had flown more than 23,000 combat hours in more than 12,000 sorties.

The 27th Fighter-Escort Wing received the distinguished unit citation, covering the period of Jan. 26 through April 21, 1951, for their actions in Korea.

(Next week: 27th FW - From Korea to today.)



Local visitors observe a F-111 up close during Cannon Appreciation Day, June 15, 1983.

General John K. Cannon was a World War II Mediterranean Combat Commander and former Chief of U.S. Air Forces in Europe for whom Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, is named.

